United Nations A/63/PV.4

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

4th plenary meeting
Monday, 22 September 2008, 6.10 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

High-level plenary meeting on the theme "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward"

Agenda item 57 (*continued*)

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

(a) New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Draft resolution (A/63/L.1)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.1, entitled "Political declaration on Africa's development needs". May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.1?

Draft resolution A/63/L.1 was adopted (resolution 63/1).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Chairman of the African Union, His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete.

President Kikwete: This has been a great day for Africa. The adoption of the political declaration is yet another strong signal of the United Nations commitment to Africa's future and of the international community's partnership with Africa.

I welcome the strong statements of support for Africa made at the opening plenary meeting, as well as the refreshing and frank discussions in the round tables on Africa's challenges, the state of implementation of various commitments and, especially, the way forward. I was also happy with the fact that there were 15 side events on topics ranging from women and development to the food crisis, energy and the challenge of governance. The side events witnessed a remarkable assembly of expertise on Africa-African and non-African alike. The outcome of those discussions certainly enriched the political declaration that we adopted here a few minutes ago.

I also welcome the press conference alongside Mr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank. We had a chance to engage the United Nations press corps.

It has been a successful day for Africa. There has been a lot of talk in the past about Africa's development; today, I was encouraged by the tremendous resolve to act. Let us go forth with renewed momentum so that, when we look back on this day, we can testify that we were there when history was made — indeed, when the world awoke to its moral and shared responsibility towards Africa.

Statement by the President

The President: I wish from the outset to express my gratitude to my facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Angola and the Netherlands, for

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

08-51593 (E)

conducting the intergovernmental consultations on the declaration we have just adopted.

We have come to the end of our day of dynamic deliberations on Africa's special development needs. Now comes the hard part: keeping the promises. Let us not repeat history by breaking them. Let us rise to the occasion and make poverty history instead.

The declaration we have just adopted, by consensus, contains an agenda for action: urgent action. Eradicating poverty, particularly in Africa is the greatest global challenge facing the world today. Our declaration says that it is a global challenge that must be addressed, by and large, by the only truly global institution: the United Nations. That is why the declaration states that a stronger Africa requires a stronger United Nations.

The declaration and our exchange today have strengthened my conviction that we have chosen the right priorities for this session of the General Assembly: Africa's priorities are the Assembly's priorities. Apart from the great global challenge of poverty, the food crisis is prominently featured, along with its potentially ruinous impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Also key is Africa's vulnerability to the effects of climate change and the need for new and additional resources to deal with them. Moreover, Africa's own commitments to the water and sanitation goals are highlighted in the declaration, along with the need to place women's empowerment at the heart of development policies.

The democratization of the United Nations, the key objective of the General Assembly, resonates in this document as well: we read about "the need to enhance the voice and participation of developing countries in policymaking in the areas of trade, money and finance" (*para. 19*). While this high-level meeting itself reinforces international democratization by raising the profile of the world's most representative organ — the General Assembly — we need to ensure that each single voice counts and that the Assembly can make the difference.

It is high time for the General Assembly to take back from the Group of Eight (G8) and the Bretton Woods institutions the initiative in the development debate in general and with regard to Africa in particular: no barricades, no barbed wire, no tear gas. We need to move the debate from seclusion to inclusion: that is what development is all about and that is what only this Assembly can offer.

The General Assembly is the body where the African continent constitutes the largest group and where the African voice is heard at its loudest and clearest. But we are not listening to that voice nearly enough: according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), less than half of all aid is directed towards the national priorities of developing country Governments. Many here have denounced the fall in official development assistance (ODA), including the portion allocated to agriculture, a priority of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) from the start, which stands now at only 7 per cent of overall development assistance. That, coupled with the agricultural subsidies granted by developed countries, portrays a catastrophic scenario, which must be addressed if we are to defeat the ongoing food crisis.

Railroading African Governments by ignoring NEPAD's priorities will not get the continent on track for attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Rallying around African priorities instead will go a long way, and the Assembly can lead the way. That is what we have seen today.

I will not try to summarize today's rich discussion. Let me briefly highlight some common threads. There is a sense of emergency, and concrete actions must follow suit. Africa's future ultimately lies in the hands of Africans themselves: development starts at home. But it is clear that Africa's efforts must be complemented with a substantial change in international economic and trade policies. In that regard, debt relief must be tackled more aggressively so as to free the necessary funds for social investment instead of paying what has become an *ad vitam aeternam* debt. There is also a huge expectation that donor countries will ultimately abide by their pledges and fulfil their commitments to double ODA by 2010.

Home-grown political and economic reforms, including those focused on strengthening democracy and human rights and creating a healthy private sector, need to be complemented with resources from the outside: Africa lacks the resources to pull itself out of the poverty trap alone.

International aid is not just a matter of the heart. It is also a matter of the head, a matter of real and concrete political will. An African renaissance is in the

common interest. If we are to bring about that renaissance, we need to look beyond aid alone: development, security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing — they form a trinity. Hence the imperious necessity to concentrate our efforts on the social development of Africa: the sine qua non condition for peace, security and respect for all human rights.

Many participants pointed out that today's meeting is the first in a series of three this autumn. Today is about Africa, about the place on which we need to concentrate our development efforts. The second meeting, this Thursday, 25 September, is about the Millennium Development Goals and the themes that require more attention. And finally, the upcoming Financing for Development Review Conference to take place in November in Doha will be about how to muster the financial resources and the political resolve to keep our promises. We must closely monitor whether commitments are indeed being turned into concrete actions. I am pleased that the declaration sets the basis for such a monitoring mechanism.

Before I close, I want to pay tribute to President Thabo Mbeki. During his presidency of the rainbow nation, spanning nearly a decade, he, along other African leaders, championed the vision of NEPAD we still pursue today. When the affluent listen to Africa and partner with it, that vision is within reach. To quote NEPAD's founding document: "In fulfilling its promise, this agenda must give hope to the emaciated African child that the twenty-first century is indeed Africa's century" (*A/57/304, annex, para. 207*).

As was highlighted this morning, today's mantra should be "implementation": implementation of all the commitments to our African brothers and sisters. After speeches of solemnity comes the test of solidarity.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The Assembly has thus concluded its high-level plenary meeting on the theme "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward". The Assembly has also thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 57.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.